

The Return of the Orange Tip

By ALBERT G. LONG *

(Concluded from page 44)

(v) In County Durham (VC 66)

As early as 1846, the Orange Tip was recorded by Rev. George Ornsby in his book "Sketches of Durham". Later, George Wailes (1857) described it as "generally distributed" (*T.T.N.F.C.* 3, 195). The evidence for the rest of the last century is inconclusive; in all probability the species persisted, though it may have decreased towards the end, as in Northumberland and the Scottish border counties.

During the first two decades of the present century the Orange Tip seems to have become scarce. In 1939, Professor J. W. H. Harrison published an account "The Present Position of our Local Butterflies compared with that of 40 years ago", in which he wrote: "In 1900 this butterfly occurred in certain Durham and Southern Northumberland localities in small numbers, and even the years 1902 and 1903 produced little change for the worse. Nevertheless, after that, its numbers progressively lessened, and it even vanished from some Northumberland stations. Now it is once more on the upward grade" (*Vasculum* 52, 119). In 1951 the same author wrote "After many years of decadence produced by the bad seasons of 1902-3 the Orange Tip began to recover lost ground in 1919. One of the last areas to be recolonized was the Blackhall Rocks. However, on July 2nd it was flying in the little dene half a mile south of the Hotel" (*Vasculum* 36, 24). As early as 1905 G. T. Nicholson had recorded in his field notebook that he netted nine specimens in June at Croft.

Its history in the years 1919-1969 is one of regular occurrence, generally at low density but in relative abundance in some seasons in certain localities. Writers regarded its years of plenty as welcome exceptions to its general scarcity. During this period, the date of its first appearance was recorded under the Royal Meteorological Society's scheme for phenological observations. Such a record testifying to its presence was made in fourteen of the fifteen years 1925-1939 by the Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists Field Club (*Vasculum* 26, 20-24). Years of relative plenty include 1925, 1930, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1939 and 1945, only seven years in the period under consideration. Throughout the fifties and early sixties no marked change seems to have been noted. Thus, in 1958, Professor J. W. H. Harrison wrote "This butterfly was very scarce this year although a female was found at rest on flowers of an umbellifer at Elemore on June 28" (*Vasculum* 43, 32). The first indication of marked increase was noted in 1969 by T. C. Dunn, who wrote "The Orange Tip was such more widespread than usual" (*Vasculum* 54, 10). Evidence of the increase in the Redworth

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area in 1971 was given by T. W. Jefferson, who wrote "Some species have appeared for the first time for many years in this area including *Anthocharis cardamines*—in places where they have been strangers since 1965" (*Vasculum* 57, 1). In 1973, T. C. Dunn wrote "This year has seen a sudden explosion in the populations of the Orange Tip butterflies in Durham County . . . all inland colonies seem to have increased, with some of them spilling over their natural boundaries . . . This year it has turned up all over the place and has even appeared in urban gardens in some of the most built-up industrial towns. Has the recent series of mild winters had anything to do with it?" (*Vasculum* 58, 10). In a later note he added "The first specimen noted in the Chester-le-Street area was in my garden on May 25th 1973. This is right in the built-up area of the town and this is the first time I have known it to fly so far from its usual haunts in 25 years residence here . . ." (*Vasculum* 58, 13). Similar reports were recorded from Darlington, south-west Durham, Winlaton Hill and elsewhere, so that T. C. Dunn again wrote in 1975 "news has been flowing in of its increase almost everywhere in Durham . . ." (*Vasculum* 60, 4). Subsequent records show that this increase and spread has continued into the present year (1978).

(vi) In Peebles (VC 78); Selkirk (VC 79); and
Roxburgh (VC 80)

In order to try and trace the increase of the Orange Tip in these Scottish border counties, I have sought the help of Mr. Arthur J. Smith (A.J.S.) of Selkirk and Mr. Andrew G. Buckham (A.G.B.) of Galashiels, from whom I have received most of the records listed below.

At Peebles one female and two males were seen on 18.7.1975 and several at Innerleithen on 18.5.1978 (A.G.B.). Doubtless there would be earlier records and it would be of interest to know of these, especially if they are for last century.

For Selkirkshire, A.J.S. wrote saying he knew of no records before 1975. His former schoolmaster who was a keen collector had never seen it. Mr. Smith's first view of a Border specimen was one which came to him in a matchbox from Lanton in Roxburgh about 1928. His first known record for Selkirk was on 17.5.1975 at Duchess Drive, Bowhill, and the second of a male seen by Dr. J. Meikle at Bridgeheugh on 27.5.1975. Another male was seen in a Selkirk garden by Dr. C. Tinlin on 30.5.1975. Ova were found on *Alliaria petiolata* at Bridgeheugh near Selkirk on 3.6.1976 (A.J.S.) and two males were seen at Thirlestane, Ettrick, in 1976 by Mrs. Sanderson. Several were seen at Mauldsheugh by the river at Selkirk on 26.5.1977 (A.J.S.). One male was seen at St. Mary's Loch on 25.5.1978 and another at Selkirk Hill on 27.5.1978 (A.J.S.). Several males were seen at Blackpool Moss on 3.6.1978 and at Nether Whitlaw Moss on 4.6.1978 (A.G.B.), others were observed at Lindean Reservoir 4.6.1978 (A.J.S.).

For Roxburghshire the published evidence shows that the Orange Tip was well established in the second half of last century. In 1867 Sir Walter Elliot recorded it for Denholm (*H.B.N.C.* 5, 329), and in 1882 Adam Elliot of Samieston, Jedburgh recorded it for Roxburghshire (*H.B.N.C.* 10, 154). In 1895 William Grant Guthrie reported it as not uncommon for Burnfoot and Hornshole at the east end of old Hawick (*H.B.N.C.* 15, 332). George Bolam in 1925 wrote that "more than fifty years ago it used to be taken fairly commonly by W. B. Boyd at Cherrytrees near Yetholm" (*H.B.N.C.* 25, 522). By 1901, it was once more becoming frequent in Jedwater (*Entomologist* 63, 130). Mr. A. J. Smith received a specimen from Lanton about 1928 (see above).

More recently there has been a remarkable increase of the Orange Tip in Roxburgh similar to that in Northumberland and Durham. In the years 1971-78 it has been seen each year at Wells Sawmill, naer Denholm (A.G.B.). Other records are from near Newcastleton and Ancrum in 1974 (A.J.S.); and from Crookholm Wood in Liddesdale in June 1977 (A. Garside). In 1978 it was seen at St. Boswells (P. Summers and A.G.B.); Newtown St. Boswells and Maxton (A.G.B.); Denholm (G. A. Elliot); Morebattle (M. E. Braithwaite); Kelso and Galashiels (A.G.B.), between May 17 and June 3.

It would appear therefore that the commencement of the increase in the Scottish border counties was about 1971, two years later than in County Durham, but four years earlier than that in Berwickshire. This might mean that the increase in the Borders was in part caused by a spread from the south or west in a north and easterly direction.

(vii) In south-west Scotland (VCs 72-74)

Although I have no personal knowledge of the Orange Tip in south-west Scotland, Mr. E. C. Pelham-Clinton of the Royal Scottish Museum, has informed me that there are a few dated records, e.g. for Stranraer (VC 74) in 1882; Kirkcudbrightshire VC 73, in 1884; followed by a gap up to 1943, when it was recorded for Tynron, Dumfries VC72, and several records in 1947 and 1948. This pattern suggests a decline and recovery.

(viii) In Cumbria (VCs 69 and 70)

According to information received from Dr. N. L. Birkett, the Orange Tip has been common in southern Cumbria over a period of about 50 years. This is confirmed from notebooks of the late Dr. R. C. Lowther of Grange-over-Sands who also maintained that it was scarcer in northern Cumbria (formerly Cumberland). The late Frank Littlewood of Kendal also recorded it in the Kendal area (common) but said it was scarcer about Lancaster. The evidence therefore suggests that in at least southern Cumbria as in Durham and south Northumberland, the Orange Tip has been present for as long as records are known. In northern Cumbria, however, its status is less certain. G. T. Nicholson recorded Orange Tips near Keswick (VC 70) on 4.6.1911, and in a wood near Gilsland

railway station near the northern limit of Cumbria on 25.5.1896. I personally saw a few specimens near the King Water in VC 70 on 28.5.1977.

Conclusion

The evidence shows that in the Scottish border counties the Orange Tip was established last century, but a decline set in sometime after 1880. This resulted in virtual extinction over much of the Border region but mostly in the eastern half. Except in certain years, this state of affairs lasted up to the seventies of this century. The increase that then occurred, was possibly the culmination of a long gradual recovery most pronounced in the south and west, resulting in a steady extension northwards and eastwards. Two factors may have influenced this recovery. Mr. E. C. Pelham-Clinton favours the view that agriculture, especially draining and grazing, may have gradually eliminated *A. cardamines*, but that forestry has possibly helped it to spread again, since *Cardamine pratense* grows along the sheltered drainage ditches in young plantations. Another factor may be the more recent changed policy of reduced cutting of roadside verges. This favours the growth of *Alliaria petiolata*, another favourite foodplant of the Orange Tip along hedge-grows and roadside ditches.

Whether or not the climate was a factor affecting the decline of *cardamines* towards the end of last century is impossible to assess. There were two very severe winters in the Scottish Borders in 1879 and 1880, but the effect of these on the Orange Tip population was apparently never noticed to my knowledge.

Postscript

In the first part of this article, there are three errors. These are: (1) Page 16, line 17 down — the book title should read: "*Lauder and Lauderdale*". (2) Page 16, line 12 up — the place name should read: "Stichill". (3) Page 17, line 29 — "the old railway track" should be followed by "near Powburn".

Abbreviations

H.B.N.C. History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club.
T.N.H.S. Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
T.T.N.F.C. Transactions of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club.

THE HORNET (*VESPA CRABRO* L.) IN WARWICKSHIRE. — For some time I have been meaning to report the occurrence of the Hornet in Claverdon, a village some six miles due west of Warwick. A listener to the BBC Radio 4 programme "Wild-life", Mrs. Katherine Penrose, sent in a queen which was passed to me for identification. It was caught by her in her garage on 7th November 1978, and she also mentioned that another was caught two or three days previously by her next door neighbours. — J. F. BURTON, BBC Natural History Unit, Broadcasting House, Bristol BS8 2LR.